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SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PM SOCRATES

11. (U) Classified by Paul Wohlers, Deputy Executive Secretary, S/ES, Department of State. Reason 1.4 (d)

12. (U) September 4, 2008, 1930, Lisbon, Portugal.

13. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
Ambassador Thomas Stephenson
Assistant Secretary Dan Fried
Assistant Secretary C. David Welch
LTG William Fraser
David Ballard (Embassy Notetaker)

Portugal
Prime Minister Jose Socrates
Foreign Minister Luis Amado
PM's Chief of Staff Pedro Lourtie
MFA Political Director Nuno Brito
PM's Diplomatic Advisor Jorge Roza Oliveira
Jose Frederico Ludovice (PM Notetaker)

14. (C/NF) SUMMARY: In a 45 minute meeting, Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates and the Secretary discussed Russia and Georgia, Kosovo, and Transatlantic relations. On Russia, Socrates evinced great concern about the implications of Russia's attack on Georgia, but made clear that Portugal would stand under the EU umbrella in addressing this issue. He expressed confidence in Sarkozy's handling of the crisis. He reiterated the GOP's determination to recognize Kosovo, but said that Portugal had delayed recognition in order to "show that we recognize with reluctance," due mainly to concerns about international law. On Transatlantic relations, Socrates made clear that Portugal considers a united European-American position, rooted in shared values, the key to handling emerging challenges like Russia and China. End Summary.

Russia: Trust Sarkozy

15. (C/NF) The Secretary began her meeting with Portuguese Prime Minister Socrates with a discussion of Russia and Georgia, saying that recent events required NATO and Europe to draw conclusions and, most important, respond with firmness. Socrates agreed and said that it is also important for the EU to keep frightened members (in Central and Eastern Europe) confident and to allay their concerns about Russian aggression. He added that the position of the EU is to be firm but to keep engaging with Russia. Sarkozy is the right person to handle this issue right now because he is free of the baggage of his predecessors, is energetic and proactive, and is the representative of a nation Russia has more confidence in than others. (Socrates repeated the mantra of trust in Sarkozy to do the right thing several times during the conversation.) Sarkozy, moreover, is capable of taking risks, a valuable trait in

these circumstances. We and the European Council support him. The early opinion that Georgia had rashly provoked Russia has faded because of Russia's failure to implement the 6-point ceasefire, its recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and its overall difficult stance. It is important at this point to be firm and give confidence to our member states.

¶16. (C/NF) The Secretary clarified that the United States had made a deliberate decision not to take the lead and not to turn the current situation into a U.S.-Russia conflict. We support Sarkozy's efforts and believe he is doing a good job, on balance. We need to maintain pressure on Russia to respect the agreement they have signed or face consequences. The agreement has clear requirements and they are in violation of them. It will be difficult for Sarkozy to go to Moscow and be firm in holding the Russians to what they have promised. But he must do so. The Russians must feel that what they have done has costs. They overplayed their hand and, in recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have made a mistake. Businesspeople and a new generation of Russians with ties to the West are upset. If we are firm and continue to say that Russia is not living up to its obligations, we may be able to force a change in behavior. Europe cannot show weakness. It is time to stop them now?not (yet) through sanctions, but through firmness in reaction to Russia's actions.

¶17. (C/NF) Socrates agreed and noted that Russia had made a "serious mistake" in recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. This alarmed many European states, which at the Bucharest NATO summit were still more sanguine about dealing with Russia; recognition is a "serious step without return." He asserted that he appreciated the US position and believed that the United States was doing a good job handling the crisis and making useful statements, but that Europe, too, has a responsibility and must support Sarkozy's efforts, even though the situation is risky. In the end, Russia must realize that it is not in its interests to "have this attitude with Europe and the United States and that it was a mistake to increase tension."

¶18. (C/NF) The Secretary noted that Russia has generated other reactions, including failure to win support for its recognition of Georgia's provinces at the recent meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China's concern (based somewhat on worries about Taiwan), and unrest in other regions of the Caucasus. The United States did not intend any radical response, such as expelling Russia from the G-8, but stressed the importance of being firm. She inquired how Sarkozy would report on his trip to Moscow. Socrates said that he would do so at the Council meeting in October and noted that Sarkozy is confident he can manage this, but if he returns from Moscow "with empty hands, it will be difficult." The "spirit in Europe" he continued, is one of dismay. Europe has sought constructive ties with Russia, but every six months "it's something else that's a problem: Polish meat, the U.S. missile shield, Kosovo. They seem so eager to 'recover pride' that they won't move in negotiations." We recognize that they have a domestic interest in "recovering pride" and we must do our best to negotiate with them, but we must insist that they respect their word on the ceasefire agreement.

¶19. (C/NF) The Secretary asserted that she hoped that the message would be clear that if Russia did not live up to its obligations there would be an effect. Many Russians want to be part of the world, and they are uncomfortable with those who seek "revenge" for the loss of the Cold War. The initial phase of the war in Georgia might have stirred pride in Russians, but now many are concerned. When Russia pursues recognition for South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the only thing they get is those two recognizing each other, along with Hamas and Nicaragua, it's an embarrassment. We can make this very costly to Russia. Socrates agreed and said that a positive point was that the Russia of today is very different from the Russia

of 20 years ago. 20 million Russians travel abroad every year, western interests are important to them, and that will cause pressure. What Russia has done is "very stupid; they cannot think we are in their hands. If Sarkozy comes back with nothing, Europe has to answer with firmness."

Kosovo: "Recognition with Reluctance"

¶10. (C/NF) The Secretary queried Socrates on the status of Portugal's stated intention to recognize Kosovo, noting that what has happened in Georgia affects other "frozen conflicts" and that international recognition of Kosovo helps resolve them.

¶11. (C/NF) In response, Socrates took the unprecedented tack of combining all of the reasons/pretexts previously aired for Portugal's delay in recognition (international law, President Cavaco Silva's hesitancy, need to build domestic consensus between the two leading political parties, concern about offending those who might be offended by recognition) into a simple formula. He said "We want to recognize, but I must be honest. We have not yet because we want to show that we recognized with reluctance. So we took time." He went on to elaborate that there had been a plan to recognize before UNGA, when President Cavaco Silva would go to the UN, but that, for unspecified reasons, "we don't know if we can do it now." It is a question of "weeks," Socrates asserted several times, noting that the attitude of Russia "helps us now," but if it's not before UNGA it "might be after." He slipped once in stating that the plan had been to recognize before UNGA but that the President had played a role in changing the plan.

¶12. (C/NF) The Secretary responded that Portugal should recognize Kosovo as soon as it could.

Transatlantic Alliance: Are we strong enough?

¶13. (C/NF) Socrates followed up on the discussion of Kosovo to note that the importance of the Transatlantic Alliance to Portugal could not be overstated. Echoing comments we have often heard from Foreign Minister Luis Amado (who was present), he said, "It is clear that the alliance between the United States and Europe is the most important thing to make our common values more influential. We face challenges like Russia and China, and they will become more difficult. But I don't know if we are strong enough."

¶14. (C/NF) The Secretary responded by stating her satisfaction with the state of the Alliance and underscoring its importance to the U.S. in resolving problems we face together.

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